O'Brien Denounces FCC's Ruling As Politically Oriented for Nixon

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Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien denounced the Federal Communications Commission yesterday as a politically oriented body that strives to deny President Nixon's critics access to television.

He accused the FCC of stalling on the Democratic Party's demands for equal time to respond to Mr. Nixon's televised appearances and suggested that its chairman, Dean Burch, is acting from political motives.

The FCC would not comment on the charge.

"The commission seems to view its primary mission as keeping those opposing the President's policies and programs from gaining equitable access to television," O'Brien said. The party chairman's statement was part of a long-sustained effort by Democrats to establish the automatic right of reply on television to speeches, press conferences and other appearances by the President.

The latest step was the filing yesterday of a lengthy brief asking the U.S. Court of Appeals here to set FCC order which rejected the Democrats' demand for air time to reply to three presidential appearances early this year.

The Democrats regard the issue as pressing now because of the approaching presidential election. They fear Mr. Nixon will attempt to dominate the broadcast media with public announcements as the election nears.

Joseph A. Califano Jr., general counsel for the Democratic National Committee, said yesterday that the party hopes to establish a right of televised reply to any presidential appearance except the trivial.

"Any time the President speaks on issues of public importance we have a right of reply," Califano said during a press conference.

Although O'Brien strongly implied that Burch and the FCC have been acting in the Republican Party's interests, it is a matter of record that Democrats on the commission frequently side with the Republican majority in political broadcast time cases.